

# **The Creek War in Alabama**

## *An ABPP Case Study*



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## Introduction

Prevailing literature suggests that the Creek War in Alabama was a minor sub-plot of the War of 1812. Recent research, however, shows how Major General Andrew Jackson's campaigns in Alabama sculpted the American culture. In 2001 Southern Research surveyed 31 properties for the ABPP (Elliott et al. 2002). Consultants reviewed primary sources, conducted field reconnaissance and GPS/GIS mapping. After evaluation, they compiled potential National Register boundaries and made recommendations for future management. The following four examples highlight this work: the Federal Road, Tuckabatchee, Hillabee town, and Econochaca. The Federal Road was one of the first major federal work projects in the South. It passed through the center of the Creek Nation and helped to divide them, both physically and metaphorically. The road also served as a transportation route for troops in several military campaigns in Alabama. The ABPP survey team retraced major portions of this route on the modern landscape. The three Creek village sites discussed were sacred ground occupied by Native American tribes and are important elements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century cultural landscape. The Consultants were successful in locating resources associated with them. This presentation should give all attendees of the conference a greater appreciation of Alabama's role in the War of 1812.

This monograph is a revised and expanded version of a presentation made by Tracy M. Dean and Daniel T. Elliott at the International Battlefield Conference, Nashville, Tennessee on April 24, 2004. This survey information is extracted from a broader study done by Southern Research Historic Preservation Consultants, Inc., Ellerslie, Georgia (Daniel T. Elliott, Principal Investigator), which was submitted to the National Council of State Historic Preservation Officers and the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Initiative, American Battlefield Protection Program, National Park Service, Washington, D.C. These data were later incorporated into a report that was recently submitted to the U.S. Congress (Gossett and Williams 2007).

The National Council of SHPOs contracted with Southern Research Historic Preservation Consultants, Inc. to work on the Congressionally-funded inventory of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 initiative of the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) of the National Park Service for the State of Alabama. The fieldwork was conducted in the Spring and Summer of 2001 with completion in January 2002. The synthesis of this research by the National Park Service preservationists was recently released in a publication entitled, Report to Congress on the Historic Preservation of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Sites in the United States (Gossett and Williams 2007).

The ABPP researchers outlined methodology to identify, document and assess resources pertaining to the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Historical research involved examining primary and secondary written accounts of the battle and available maps, determining the order of battle for each side in the engagement, and developing a list of property owners containing the battlefield site.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Global Positioning Satellite (GPS), photography and surface inspection were utilized during the project. No excavation or collection of objects was employed since the American Battlefield Protection Program did not require it. The location and conditions of key features of the battlefields and historic sites that were identified from historical research and field recon were observed and recorded with GPS handheld technology. Field photographs of panoramic views of the study sites were linked with the GPS information and incorporated into a GIS database. Cases were made for their significance in importance of American history and the ultimate protection of these valuable resources.



**Figure 1. Probable Creek Non-Domestic Structure Ruin, Hickory Ground, Alabama.**

Thirty-one sites were inventoried, but only four are highlighted. These sites exhibit tangible evidence recovered during the survey and have not been highlighted or covered in previous research. The sites to be discussed are the Federal Road, Tuckabatchee, Hillabee and Econochaca.

### **Timeline of War of 1812 in Alabama**

- 1806 – November 1811, Federal Road built thereby connecting Fort Hawkins, Georgia to Fort Stoddert, American outpost north of Mobile.
- 1810, West Florida, from Pearl River to the Mississippi, annexed by U.S. from Spain.
- 1812, Congress authorizes volunteer corps of 50,000 under General Andrew Jackson.
- July 25, 1812, the first blood of the War of 1812 was shed in a skirmish not far from Detroit.
- Late, 1812, General Jackson ordered to defend lower states.

- February, 1813, General Jackson ordered to dismiss Tennessee troops but he refuses.
- April, 1813, U.S. annexed West Florida, from the Pearl River to the Perdido River, from Spain; Spanish surrender Mobile to American forces.
- April 15, 1813, Fort Charlotte handed over to Americans and renamed Fort Conde
- July 20, 1813, Battle of Tuckabatchee between Red Sticks and Friendly Creeks.
- June 25, 1813, 330 Red Sticks camped at Holy Ground, or Econochaca, prepare for war
- July 27, 1813, Battle of Burnt Corn Creek between Mississippi militia and Red Sticks.
- Sometime prior to July 27, 1813, Fort Sinquefield built by Mississippi frontiersmen
- July, 1813, Fort Mims built by Mississippi frontiersmen
- Summer, 1813, two forts constructed at Mount Vernon near Fort Stoddert, Mississippi Territory
- August 30, 1813, Fort Mims Massacre, Mississippi Territory
- Days prior to Nov. 3, Fort Strother established by General Jackson.
- November 3 1813, Battle of Tallusahatchee between Red Sticks and Tennessee militia.
- November 9, 1813, Battle of Talladega between Red Sticks and Tennessee militia and their allies.
- November 18, 1813, Hillabee (Hillabi) massacre by Cherokees and Tennessee militia.
- November 29, 1813, Battle of Autosse (Atasi) between Red Sticks and Georgia militia and their allies.
- December 23, 1813, Battle of Econochaca, or Holy Ground between Red Sticks and Mississippi militia and Choctaw allies.
- January 22, 1814, Battle of Emuckfau Creek between U.S. Troops and allies against Red Sticks.
- January 24, 1814, Battle of Enitachopko Creek between U.S. Troops and allies against Red Sticks.
- January 27, 1814, Battle of Calabee Creek between Georgia militia and Red Sticks.
- Prior to March 27, 1814, Fort Williams established by U.S. Army under General Jackson.
- March 27, 1814, Battle of Horseshoe Bend between U.S. Army and Tennessee militia, Friendly Creeks, Cherokees, and other allies versus Red Sticks.
- Summer of 1814, a British and Indian force from Spanish Pensacola attacked the garrison of the Second Infantry Regiment at Fort Bowyer. This first British thrust on New Orleans was thwarted.
- July 10 1814, Andrew Jackson had been promoted to the rank of Major-General. From his home in Tennessee he proceeded with a small escort to Fort Jackson, where he safely arrived, and assumed the command of the Southern army. He had been empowered by the Federal Government to conclude a treaty of peace with the Creek nation.
- August 1814, Treaty of Fort Jackson signed at Fort Toulouse. Creek Indians forced to cede lands to U.S. comprising nearly half of the state. U.S. represented by General Andrew Jackson.
- September 15, 1814, British attack on Fort Bowyer on Mobile Point fails.
- January 1815, Treaty of Ghent signed at Ghent, Belgium between the United States of American and Great Britain
- February 9, 1815, British forces take Fort Bowyer on return from defeat at New Orleans, then abandon the post upon learning that the war is over.

## The Federal Road

The Federal Road is a road that primarily originated as an 1806 postal horse path. Established by a Treaty between the U.S. and the Creek Nation, the road was funded by Congress and completed by 1811. Construction of the road allowed the U.S. government to gain access to a region that had not previously been settled by Euro-Americans, other than by traders. Supplies and troops from Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and troops from Tennessee, traversed the road during various military campaigns from 1813 to 1815.

The Federal Road provided access to the Creek Nation and the Mississippi Territory, which was ultimately the downfall of the Creeks. As part of Georgia General John Floyd's Creek Campaign, it was envisioned that supply forts would be constructed along this route within a day's journey, by horse, from each other. Forts along the Federal Road in Alabama included (from East to West): Mitchell, Bainbridge, Hull, and Calabee, which were built by Georgia troops under command of General John Floyd, Decatur and Burrows, which were built by Georgia and Carolina troops under command of Graham, Stoddert, Deposit and Mims which was built by Mississippi troops under command of General Ferdinand Claiborne.



**Figure 2. Possible Military Ditch at Fort Bainbridge, Alabama.**

In addition to all of these forts, there were inns and trading posts located along the route. Examples include Creek Stand, Warrior Stand, and one unknown two-story log structure, which were examined in the ABPP study that may possibly be the Crabtree Inn, which

was located near Uchee, Alabama. Many of the inns (or stands) along the route in the eastern portion of Alabama were owned by people of Creek descent. The construction of forts along the Federal Road enabled settlement especially after the War of 1812. As people traveled along the road and saw what was there they moved there. Also, soldiers who were garrisoned at these forts would sometimes settle in the area and communities cropped up around these old forts.

Several battles occurred along the Federal road, or within a few miles of it. The slaughter of Americans by Red Sticks known as the Massacre at Fort Mims is the most infamous battle that occurred on the Federal Road in late August 1813. Other battles on or near the road include Burnt Corn, Atasi, and Calabee Creek.

Portions of the route changed over time or depending upon weather conditions had alternate segments, thereby creating a braiding effect in some areas of the road. The Federal Road begins at Fort Hawkins near Macon, Georgia and crosses the State of Alabama. The road began in Alabama at what was to later become Fort Mitchell, and went southwest to end at Fort Stoddert, which is located north of the City of Mobile. The road crosses only a few drainages and the road maintains a general grade along ridge crests that would have facilitated transportation of heavy things pulled by horses.

The Federal Road was equivalent to an Interstate Highway of its time that connected New Orleans to the eastern seaboard and it continued to be a major transportation route for many years. Today, much of the road is still in use as U.S. highways and county roads. Some portions of the original road have been abandoned and are recognizable as a 19th century roadway. Multiple areas where significant vistas of the historical landscape such as wagon ruts and entrenched look lined with old Cedars and Oak trees are preserved.

After the creation of Columbus, Georgia in 1828, a new segment of the road was created, thereby sectioning off a portion on the lower Federal Road. This portion of the road exists in sections that can be formally studied, documented and ultimately used as an interpretive trail where archeological sites along the road could be integral stops. The Georgia segment of the Federal Road was not part of this or any ABPP study and remains completely unexplored.



## **Tuckabatchee**

Tuckabatchee, located on the Tallapoosa River was the capital town of the Upper Creeks at the time of the Creek War. It is significant for the role it played in the beginning of the Civil War. Events at Tuckabatchee triggered the Creeks involvement in the War of 1812 and Tecumseh, Benjamin Hawkins and Big Warrior were linked to the town. Tecumseh was a Shawnee leader who led a major uprising against the United States and headed the prophet movement; Benjamin Hawkins was the primary Indian Agent, South of the Ohio River, for the United States; and Big Warrior was the Chief of Tuckabatchee.

Tecumseh addressed the town in 1811 trying to incite an uprising against the United States with his prophesy that if the Creeks did not fight, the earth would shake. His predictions were confirmed the following year by the New Madrid earthquake, which leveled houses in Tuckabatchee as well as changing the course of the Mississippi River.

Big Warrior was opposed to hostile actions, which forced a split among the upper Creeks and an ultimate attack on the capital. The Red Sticks, a hostile faction within the Upper Creek Nation, laid siege to Tuckabatchee in July 1813. The siege lasted eight days, until Benjamin Hawkins sent approximately 200 Friendly forces from Georgia to relieve Tuckabatchee and drive off the Red Sticks. The Friendlies involved were Lower Creeks led by Joseph Marshall and William McIntosh, Yuchis led by Timpoochee Barnard, and Tuckabatchees led by Big Warrior. The identity and leaders of the Red Sticks in this engagement remain unidentified. No federal or state troops were involved in the siege and the subsequent rescue of Tuckabatchee as it was a Civil War among the Creeks.

### **Order of Battle, Tuckabatchee**

Friendly Creeks, Commanded by Joseph Marshall

- Lower Creeks
- Yuchis
- Tuckabatchees

Red Sticks, Commander undetermined

- Upper Creeks

As the Creek capital, Tuckabatchee was a large urban center that had a diverse range of public and domestic structures whose ruins are likely to be preserved. A number of Indian traders used the town as a base of operation. The surface evidence of the town is extremely dense with Creek pottery, European items, flakes, and some human bone. One particular area contained many glass trade beads and by oral tradition is believed to be the location of the trading post.

The northern part of the town is better known archaeologically than the southern part, due to a study conducted by the University of Alabama in 1984/1985. The area studied was the periphery of the town and has since been developed into a factory. Although the core of the town has not been intensively surveyed, preliminary reconnaissance reveals a full

range of 18th and early 19th century material culture. Two earthen mounds are present and the town site probably contains the remains of a fort.



Figure 3. Tuckabatchee Town, Alabama.

## Hillabee

On November 3, 1813, Tallussahatchee a Red Stick town was surrounded and almost completely annihilated by Tennessee Militia, Friendly Cherokee and Creek troops. Six days later, another concentration of Red Sticks at Talladega was surrounded in a similar maneuver that was not well executed. Around 300 Red Sticks were killed and many wounded escaped and sought refuge at Hillabee.

The Hillabee were an Upper Creek tribe consisting of four villages that were settled in the Tallapoosa River watershed. The primary town was a small village of twenty-five houses called Hillabee. Paradoxically, the Hillabees were known as staunch Red Stick warriors who clung to the traditional ways of Creek culture while they simultaneously embraced European farming of cows and peach trees. Robert Grierson, of Scotch-Creek descent, Chief of the Hillabees, led his people in trying to preserve their way of life.



Figure 4. Hillabee Town, Tallapoosa County, Alabama.

The Hillabee tribe and their settlements have received little study, yet the town of Hillabee was occupied for at least 50 years. No formal survey has been conducted to date on Hillabee, but two surface sites have yielded a wide range of Creek artifacts including pottery, European ceramics, bottle glass, gun parts and glass beads. The sites are also likely to yield subsurface features associated with the Creek occupation. The town was burned after the massacre, which probably contributed to favorable artifact preservation. The area in general is rural and undisturbed, other than farming it is in great condition for future studies.

An 18<sup>th</sup> century French census of the Upper Creeks, noted that Hillabi and Hilapudshi, a branch village, which were located 15 leagues from Fort Toulouse, contained 80 warriors (Owens 1950:166-167). According to a 1799 description by Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins, their primary town was east of the study area: “on Col-luffa-de [identified as Bear and Town creeks on later maps], which joins Hill-au-bee creek, on the right site, one mile below the town. Hill-au-bee joins the Tallapoosa on its right bank, eight miles below New-yaw-cau. One chief only, Ne-hau-thluc-co Hau-jo, resides in the town; the people are settled out in the four following villages....4th. *Ook-tau-hau-zau-see*; from ook-tau-hau, sand, and zau-see, a great deal. It is two miles from the town, on a creek of that name, a branch of Hill-au-bee, which it joins a quarter of a mile below Col-luffa-dee, at a great shoal” (Hawkins 1982:43). Both Hillabee and Oaktasasi creeks retain their Muscogean names, which greatly strengthens the association of Upper Creek archaeological sites in the study area with their ethnohistoric counterpart.

The Pensacola-based trading companies of Panton, Leslie and Company, and later, Panton, Forbes and Company controlled trade with the Hillabees until 1814 (Brannon 1924:52-53). An undated French map of the Tallapoosa region, which likely is from the colonial period, shows several unnamed villages on the Tallapoosa River and its tributaries. None are shown in the immediate vicinity of the study area but several downstream from the Hillabees are indicated as trading partners of the English.

Owens (1950:166-167, 175, 233) identified four Hillabee villages, of which, three are relevant to the study area and are summarized below:

- Uktahasasi-- branch village of Hillabi, which was two miles from Hillabi town on the right bank of Hillabee Creek and about 5-6 miles due east of Kellyton.
- Istudshilaiki--branch village of Hillabi on left side of Hillabi Creek, four miles south of mother town, probably opposite the confluence of Town and Sandy creeks, spelled E cushe is ligau by Hawkins (1848).
- Hillabi--Upper Creek town on the left bank of Little Hillabi Creek near the Clay-Tallapoosa county line, perhaps in the vicinity of Gilbert’s Mill, opposite Pinkneyville, “prior to 1761 this town had thrown off settlements, which occupied villages by the names of Lanudshi afala; Anati tchapko, Uktaha sisi, Istudshi laiki” (Owens 1950:166-167).

On November 18, 1813, while the Hillabee Chief Robert Grierson was away from the town in the midst of peace negotiations with Brigadier General Andrew Jackson at Fort Strother, the Hillabee settlements were attacked by Tennessee militia and Cherokee warriors. The Tennessee militia consisted of approximately 1,000 Tennessee and Cherokee troops led by General White. Supposedly unbeknownst to Jackson, approximately 68 warriors were bayoneted in their huts, 250 women and children were captured and marched to Fort Armstrong on the Coosa River. No loss of life was reported

on the American side. The massacre at Hillabee was partial vindication for the slaughter of Americans at Fort Mims two months earlier.

The massacre at Hillabee angered the Upper Creeks by the betrayal of their trust while they were in the midst of peace negotiations, which prolonged the Creek War. It also forced the Upper Creeks, more particularly the Hillabees, to fight more ferociously in their defense at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in March 1814.

Had it not been for the Hillabee massacre, this Upper Creek tribe would have likely faded into obscurity in the historical record. The massacre occurred on November 18, 1813, when American troops under the command of General James White attacked the Hillabee towns. This attack took place at the same time General Jackson was negotiating for peace with Robert Grierson, who was the Hillabees' representative. The Americans spared the Hillabee village of Enitachopoco but on November 17<sup>th</sup>, they approached the town of Hillabee and on the following day killed 65 wounded Creek warriors, who were recuperating from previous battles. All of the adult men were killed; the town was burned; and 25 women and children were captured and marched to Fort Armstrong (Owens 1951:111-113).

As a result of their defeat by General Jackson at the Battle of Talledega the Hillabees sued for peace with the Americans. A letter from Robert Grierson, postmarked Hillabee and dated November 13, 1813, was sent to General Jackson, who was at Fort Strother, and it stated the following:

Hond. Sir,

Altho' perhaps unknown to your Excellency I beg leave as an old resider, that has long resided in this place, and now suffering under a most grievous disease, the palsey, besides suffering all the outrages of these outrageous lawless band of Savages, who after committing all their outrageous depredations on me and my family for five months past, on Saturday fourteen days past, they consumed my house with every thing we possessed, and left me to the inclemency of the weather, without food or raiment for self or family; they this day wait on me begging me to offer to your Excellency terms of pacification with the United States--The Glorious action you obtained the victory of, on Tuesday last, has such a good effect on their passions, as soon to wish to sue for peace: I beg leave to communicate to you such things, as needful, by this flag, which I send to you, humbly praying for your protection for myself and family, and Negroes; together with any other property we have left here; and humbly pray, that in your Clemency and mercy, that you will be graciously pleased to consider this my state of affliction, and afford me such aid & assistance, in order to procure my future preservation, as the nature of your Commission will admit you to advance--The Terms they advance to you are, that they the Hillabees from this day forever offer to lay down their arms, and to join in peace and amity with the United States of America & ever to evade every hostile measure that may be offensive to the interest and peace of the said United States government; together with any other proposition your Excellency may see cause to enjoin them to: Now as a person properly licensed from the United States agent here, I humbly pray, that if you see cause to admit them to a neutrality, as projected, you will be graciously pleased to cause them to give satisfaction for the murder of David Grierson on the 21<sup>st</sup>. April last, and Pinckney Hawkins, on the 12<sup>th</sup>. July, together with their families, with a restitution of all other property, wilfully destroyed by the Hillabee & Fish Pond Indians--Whatever answer your

Excellency may be pleased to confer on such subjects, from me, will be esteemed a favour of the highest importance at such a period as this, you may rely on me confidentially for every thing that is true: If your force is sufficient say 2000. And can march immediately to Saccapatae, and there build a fort, you will be in the centre to act against all the hostile Indians, and will conquer them in two weeks, they are panic struck with Tuesdays defeat and now is the time to follow it up--they have no ammunition nor resources of any kind--The Oakfuskee, Newyork & Tallapoosa Tribes are out against the (friendly) Cowetas seven days.

I beg leave to forward this to you by my negro man (Pompey) and beg you to send him with the Indian safe back to me with such Answer as your Excellency may please to confer on, and am to remain with high esteem, wishing God may protect you with your Army, and bless you with success to procure peace and safety to the injured Inhabitants of the land--

I, am hond. Sir Your Obt. Servant

Signed Robt Grierson

Monday 15<sup>th</sup>. Nov. 1813

Since closing my letter an Indian arrived here, & informs me that the Georgia Army are on their march by the Suwanee The Indians are evacuating their War Camps, and flying in every direction --200 invested my Plantation last night--for God sake come forward with your brave men and keep them running--

These from Hond sire your Obt. Servant

Signed Robt Grierson ((Moser and Macpherson 1984:451-452).

General Jackson wrote to Grierson in Response on November 17<sup>th</sup>:

Camp Strother Nover 17<sup>th</sup> 1813

I recd. your letter of the 13<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>. Inst. proposing terms of peace with the hostile party in the Hillabies.

We took up arms in order to bring to a proper sense of duty those barbarians who had committed so many unprovoked depredations upon us, and we shall lay them down only when we are certain we have accomplished this object. I am taking means to enable me to effect this in a short time beyond the reach of doubt. Upon those who are friendly I neither wish nor intend to make war, but then they must furnish me indurable proof of their sincerity. Let all those who were lately our enemies and who now wish to become our friends restore forthwith all the property & prisoners they may at any time have taken either from the whites or friendly Creeks--Let them deliver up all the Instigators of the present war let them meet me on my arrival with a flag & furnish my army with such provisions as they may have to spare--let them unite their forces with mine in prosecuting the war against those who still hold out & then they may expect my hand in friendship The terms upon which a final peace will be granted them will greatly depend upon their conduct in the meantime

I cannot say with absolute certainty when I shall be at your Towns; I am preparing supplies to enable me to carry a war of destruction through every part of the Creek nation

that remains unfriendly & in a few days I calculated on commencing my march. I will shew them what kind of reliance is to be placed on these prophets & those who instigated them to this war. Long shall they remember Ft. Mims in bitterness & tears

I am &c

Andrew Jackson &&c

P.S. the indian you sent on with Pompey came no farther than Talledega (Moser and Macpherson 1984:456-457).

General Jackson advised General John Cocke, an officer in the Tennessee Militia, of his ongoing peace negotiations with the Hillabees in a letter dated November 18, 1813, but Cocke either chose to ignore it or did not receive it in time to avert the attack on Hillabee town (Moser and Macpherson 1984:457-458). General Cocke ordered General White and his Tennesseans to attack the Hillabees. As a result of this underhanded attack, the Hillabees vowed to fight to the end.

Alabama historian Albert Pickett provided this summary of the Hillabee Massacre:

The mischiefs of a want of concert between the East and West Tennessee troops--growing out of a jealousy of the former and a strong desire to share some of the glory which the latter had already acquired in the few battles they had fought--were in a very few days made quite apparent. Through Robert Graison, an aged Scotchman, the Hillabees (a portion of whom fought Jackson at Talladega) made offers of peace, to which the general immediately and willingly acceded. At that very time, and when Graison had hastened back with the favorable reply of Jackson, General White surrounded the Hillabee town early in the morning and effected a complete surprise, killing sixty warriors and taking two hundred and fifty prisoners. Nov. 18 1813: The Hillabees, it is asserted, made not the slightest resistance. At all events, not a drop of Tennessee blood was spilt. The other Hillabee towns, viewing this as flagrant treachery on the part of Jackson, became the most relentless enemies of the Americans, and afterwards fought them with fiendish desperation. The destruction of this town was in pursuance of the orders of General Cocke. Nov. 18: White, in marching down, had already destroyed Little Ocfuske and Genalga, both of which had been abandoned by the inhabitants, with the exception of five warriors, who were captured at the former (Pickett 1975).

The Hillabees suffered additional insult in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend at the hand of General Andrew Jackson. On January 24, 1814 General Jackson attacked the Hillabee village of Enitachapco but was forced to retreat. The remaining warriors of Hillabees, who were not decimated by the earlier massacre and battles, assembled with their wives and children at Horseshoe Bend, where they created the makeshift town of Tohopeka. Normally the women and children were sent off before battle, so their place at Tohopeka is an indication of their resolve to attain either victory or death. Facing overwhelming American forces, however, the Tohopekans were easily conquered by General Jackson. Many of the Hillabees were killed in the ensuing battle and after the Creek surrender on August 9, 1814 and their signing of the subsequent Treaty of Fort Jackson in 1815, the Hillabee were effectively neutralized. Their homeland remained part of Creek territory until 1832 when Tallapoosa County was created, as part of the Creek land cession. For three years the Creeks were allowed to own their own property in the county, which was

issued as a series of land warrants, but in 1836 all Creeks removed from the area (Halbert and Ball 1895; Dickens 1979).



Figure 5. Early 19th Century Dwelling in Hillabee Vicinity.

### **Econochaca (Holy Ground)**

Econochaca, located on the Alabama River, was a briefly occupied Upper Creek town. The Battle of Econochaca is significant as it neutralized the southwestern theatre of war in Jackson's master plan. It is also significant for its association with William Weatherford and General Ferdinand L. Claiborne.

#### **Order of Battle, Econochaca**

United States, Commanded by General Ferdinand Claiborne

- Colonel Gilbert C. Russell's 3rd U. S. Infantry Regulars
- Colonel Carson's 1st Regiment Mississippi Infantry United States Volunteers
- Major Cassel's Battalion of Mounted Riflemen
- Major Smoot's Battalion of Militia
- Lt. Colonel Pushmataha's Battalion of Choctaw warriors

Red Sticks, Commanded by William Weatherford

- Muscogees
- Alibamos



- Shawnees
- African-American Slaves (runaways)

In early 1813 the prophets advised William Weatherford to build the town of Econochaca as a safe haven from the white settlement, which was believed impervious to attack. This was the place where the Council met and decided to go to war against the white settlers. The Red Sticks sent a party of Warriors to Pensacola to acquire weapons and ammunition. On the return to Econochaca, the party was ambushed at Burnt Corn by the Mississippi Militia. In retaliation, Weatherford, a major Upper Creek Chief who led the Red Stick movement against the United States of America, commanded the infamous slaughter of Americans at Fort Mims, which ignited the Creek War and officially engaged U.S. forces. Being of mixed descent, Weatherford's loyalties to the Red Sticks were questioned. Weatherford had relatives at Fort Mims, but ultimately proved his loyalty to the Red Sticks by leading the attack on the fort.

On December 23-24, 1813, General Ferdinand L. Claiborne led approximately 1,000 troops, which consisted of Mississippi Regulars and Militia and Lieutenant Pushmataha and his Choctaw Battalion. Thirty-three Red Sticks were killed as well as Shawnee spies. After the battle many scalps were found, presumably from the Fort Mims Massacre and incriminating Spanish documents linking the Spanish with the Red Sticks.

Weatherford personally led the defense of the doomed town of Econochaca against the United States. In December, he leapt off the bluff on his horse and became a fabled hero. Weatherford was greatly admired from both sides of the War and Brigadier General Andrew Jackson personally respected William Weatherford for his heroic feats.

Econochaca lasted less than one year and reconnaissance level archeological work identified a portion of the town. Creek pottery and wine bottle glass were abundant on the surface and indicates that it has a good potential for intact buried deposits. Econochaca, unique among the Red Stick villages, is a tangible site as part of the Prophet Movement to shun Euro-American encroachment on their traditional values. The fact that Econochaca was burned coupled with the fact that it was a short duration of settlement enhances its unique research potential for understanding this place of religious significance in the Red Stick movement in the Creek Indian War.

## Summary

The ABPP project was important in gathering baseline data of property ownership, land use patterns, development threat and further research potential. These data support the importance of the Creek War in Alabama and its crucial role in westward expansion.

Horseshoe Bend National Military Park is an excellent example of a place where this history is interpreted to the public. Due to grass root efforts, this site has been acquired, preserved and studied, thereby making it one of the more familiar battles from this era. The ABPP survey helped identify multiple sites to create an overall picture of the military landscape in Alabama during the War of 1812.

Many of the thirty-one study sites have been archeologically compromised, yet several sites within the study are excellent candidates for more intensive research and possibly interpretive development. Time is quickly passing and land use changes are occurring and the chances of working with these sites are decreasing. One example is the Hickory Ground holy site. This resource would have been an excellent candidate for protection and additional research yet was recently developed into a casino by the Poarch Creeks.

The four sites highlighted: the Federal Road, Tuckabatchee, Hillabee and Econochaca are not currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). All are threatened resources and none are in public ownership. It is recommended that additional work be done to find definitive boundaries through intensive archeological survey for three sites and the Federal Road needs a corridor surveyed along the road. These sites need to be listed on the NRHP and possibly a landmark status sought. In addition to the nominations, the properties should be considered for public acquisition. Many other sites that were investigated in the 2001 ABPP study of Alabama's battlefields and associated sites have similar stories (Elliott et al. 2002). The recommended status of these sites is tabulated in Gossett and William's summary report (Gossett and Williams 2007). Considered as a whole, the cultural resources in Alabama relating to the Creek War and the War of 1812 are woefully underdeveloped as interpretive history sites. Hopefully, as the bicentennial of the War of 1812 approaches, these shortcomings may be addressed.

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